

North Carolina Cooperative Extension
Montgomery County Center
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Monthly Newsletter
August 2026

From the Director's Desk

Chrissy Haynes, County Extension Director

I cannot believe that summer is winding down and that many of our local school systems have started back to school already or will begin within the next three weeks. I think back to March/April when my staff was deciding what summer programs we would offer this summer to children in our county to help ensure kids kept learning over the summer to help bridge the summer learning loss gap. I could not be more proud of my team for the wonderful summer they provided for kids across Montgomery County this summer. Their hard work, commitment to Extension and their love for what they do is evident throughout this newsletter!

I had the pleasure of taking 20 youth to a week-long day camp experience at Millstone 4-H Camp. 4-H Camp is a wonderful opportunity for youth to gain life skills and experience learning opportunities away from home that they would not get to experience without this opportunity. We are so thankful to all of our donors who helped make this week of camp possible for these 20 children.



Peach Festival Cooking Contest

We enjoyed facilitating the Peach Cooking Contest as a part of the NC Peach Festival. There were so many tasty desserts entered in the youth and adult divisions. Thank you to everyone who made this year's contest a success and to the judges who volunteered their time to assist with decision making. Mark your calendars now for next year's contest on the third weekend in July 2027 and make plans to enter next year's competition. Congratulations to our winners!

The youth winners were:
First Place – Kaylah Carpenter
Second Place – Junior Cruz
The Adult Winners were:
First Place – Virginia Brown
Second Place – Holly Capel
Third Place – Karen Cain







Hurricane Season Threats

We are well into the 2025 hurricane season, which officially runs from June 1 to November 30, and the tropics are beginning to become active. While no storm is currently threatening, now is the time to be prepared so you are ready if a storm does come this year.

Understanding the Threat

North Carolina's extensive coastline and history of powerful storms make hurricanes a constant threat to us. From the catastrophic flooding caused by Hurricane Florence in 2018 to the devastating impacts of Isaias in 2020 and Helene in 2024, our state is no stranger to the significant impacts these storms can have. No one knows when or if a tropical system will impact North Carolina. But the risk is always here, making preparedness not just a suggestion, but a necessity.

The Importance of Early Preparation

Being prepared can significantly mitigate the impact of a hurricane. Early preparation allows residents to address potential risks and ensure safety measures are in place before a storm threatens. Here are some crucial steps to take:

- **Create an Emergency Plan:** Develop a comprehensive family emergency plan that includes clear evacuation routes, designated meeting points, and established communication methods. Ensure all family members understand the plan and practice it regularly.
- **Build a Disaster Kit:** Assemble a kit with essential supplies, including non-perishable food, water, medications, flashlights, batteries, a first-aid kit, and essential documents. Include enough supplies to last at least three days.
- **Prepare Your Family for the Possibility of a Hurricane:** Don't be reluctant to talk with your family about the possibility of a hurricane, fire, tornado, or flood. Thought and action before the disaster hits usually help family members react wisely. Families that work together to prepare for the problem will cope better than those who do not take precautions.
- **Correct Potential Home Hazards:** Identify and correct potential home hazards. Inspect your home for vulnerabilities. Install storm shutters, reinforce doors and windows, and secure loose outdoor items to prevent damage. Conduct a thorough inspection of your home promptly to identify and rectify any potential hazards.
- **Protect Valuable Records:** Protecting family papers is an essential part of preparing you for dealing with natural disasters. Check your homeowner's insurance policy to ensure it covers hurricane damage. Consider purchasing flood insurance, as standard policies typically do not cover flood damage.
- **Plan for Pets:** Include your pets in your emergency plan. Ensure they have proper identification, and prepare a pet emergency kit with food, water, and other necessities.

Stay Informed: Stay up-to-date with weather updates and alerts from reliable sources, such as the National Hurricane Center and local media outlets. Sign up for National Weather Service or local media emergency alerts to receive timely information.

With hurricane season already upon us, North Carolinians must prepare now. Early and thorough preparation can make a significant difference in protecting lives and property. By taking proactive steps and staying informed, residents can face the upcoming hurricane season with greater confidence and resilience.

4-H Youth Development

Vacant, 4-H Youth Development Agent

Elizabeth Callicutt, 4-H Program Assistant

Paws, Claws, and Care 4-H Summer Camp

We had a special guest Stacy Mabe come and speak/teach some of our 4-Hers about being a responsible pet owner. A huge thank you to her for her support! Thank you to AKC Reunite for the microchip and stuffy donation for the class! Each student went home with a microchipped "pet"! Thank you to Pennies for P. A. W. S for the snuffle mat kits for the students to make enrichment for shelter pets! Thank you to Project Pawz for providing the most adorable and cuddly foster puppies for socialization and snuggles for quiet/reading time! Frank, Beans and Baby Squirrel did an awesome job with 21 kids! They are still looking for forever homes-please share! Learning pet owner basics is about mastering the everyday essentials: proper nutrition, routine veterinary care (like vaccines and microchipping), and providing a safe, enriching home environment. Whether you have a dog, a cat, or a pocket pet, understanding these core principles ensures a long, happy life for your furry companion. Here is your ultimate crash course on Pet Ownership 101:

1. Health & Wellness

Veterinary Care: Establish a relationship with a trusted vet early on. Keep up to date on vaccinations, dental care, and parasite control.

Microchipping: Ensure your pet has a microchip and wears a collar with an up-to-date ID tag so they can be easily identified if they wander off.

2. Nutrition & Hydration

Feed your pet high-quality food designed for their specific age, weight, and breed.

Fresh Water: Always ensure your pet has access to fresh, clean water.

3. Safety & Environment

Pet-Proofing: Remove household hazards like electrical cords, toxic plants, and small objects that can be swallowed.

Designated Safe Space: Provide your pet with a comfortable, cozy area they can retreat to, such as a crate or a bed in a quiet corner.

4. Exercise & Socialization

Daily Movement: Regular physical activity keeps your pet healthy and prevents obesity.

Training & Socialization: Expose your pet to new environments and teach basic commands using positive reinforcement.

5. Disaster Preparedness

Emergency Go-Bag: Always keep an emergency supply ready, including a 1–2-week supply of food, bottled water, medications, and a spare leash.

We also visited our local Montgomery County, NC Animal Services for your hospitality and dedication to our local animals! If you are looking to add a new best friend to your family, consider stopping by or checking out available pets at the humane society! They were AWESOME!!

We had an amazing day learning about animal care and playing with the sweetest pups and cats! We are incredibly grateful to the local animal care team for letting us visit. Thank you so much for the hard work you do to protect and care for these wonderful fur babies!

Here are a few highlights from our visit:

The Snuggles: We had a blast giving belly rubs to the dogs and socializing with the playful cats.

The Knowledge: We learned so much about the importance of pet socialization, spaying/neuter programs, and what goes into matching rescues with their forever homes.





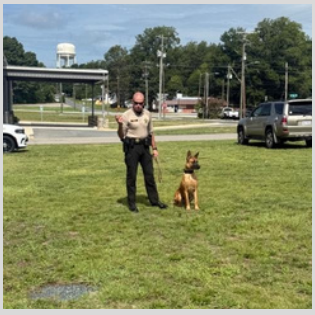


Safety Day 4-H Summer Camp

Our summer interns Callie and Kylie taught local youth some essential life skills, including: Basic First Aid, Internet Safety, Knife Safety, Animal Safety, and Sun Safety. These five topics form an essential safety foundation because together they protect children across every environment they navigate—at home, online, outdoors, and in the community. When kids learn all five pillars, the core takeaway isn't fear—it's confidence. They shift from relying entirely on adults for protection to recognizing hazards, protecting themselves and peers, and stepping up as responsible community members. Huge thanks to everyone who helped teach these life skills! Building safer communities, one lesson at a time! So proud of these two ladies!! During our safety day camp we learned that safety is a shared responsibility, and we were honored to host two vital pillars of our town! We extend our sincere gratitude to the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office and the Troy NC Fire Department for joining our Safety Day camp. THANK YOU SO VERY MUCH to the Sheriff's Department for educating our group on community law enforcement, crime prevention, and the daily operations that keep our neighborhoods secure. Equal thanks to the Troy Fire Department for delivering a session on household fire safety, prevention, and emergency response. Thank you again to all the officers, deputies, and firefighters who took time out of their schedules to educate, inspire, and engage with us! YOU ALL WERE AMAZING!









Agricultural Updates

Emi Bigford, Livestock & Field Crops
Owen Washam, Horticulture & Forestry

VAD Meeting

On July 8, the Montgomery County Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD) Agricultural Advisory Board met to review a new farm application. Noah Farms, LLC, located in Mount Gilead, applied to enroll 69 acres of forestry land and poultry production into the Voluntary Agricultural District program.

Following review and discussion, the board unanimously voted to approve the application, officially enrolling the farm into the Montgomery County Voluntary Agricultural District.

We are excited to see agriculture continue to grow in Montgomery County and are proud to support local farmers through programs like the Voluntary Agricultural District. Protecting working farms and forests helps preserve our agricultural heritage while ensuring these operations can continue contributing to the county's economy and rural landscape for generations to come.

Dirt 2 Diploma

This summer, youth participated in the Dirt to Diploma Camp, a hands-on agricultural career exploration program designed to introduce participants to the many educational pathways and career opportunities available within the local agriculture industry. Throughout the camp, participants visited community colleges, research facilities, farms, and agricultural businesses, where they met with industry professionals and gained firsthand experience in a variety of agricultural fields. They explored careers in animal science, crop and soil science, agricultural engineering, food science, natural resources, and agricultural research while learning about the educational opportunities available through North Carolina colleges and universities. The camp provided youth with valuable real-world experiences that expanded their understanding of the agricultural industry and the many career paths it offers. By the end of the program, participants had developed a greater appreciation for agriculture, built connections with professionals, and gained insight into the education and skills needed to pursue careers that support the future of agriculture in North Carolina.







Cattlemen's Board Meeting

The Montgomery County Cattlemen's Association Board meets to discuss the direction of the organization and plan educational opportunities that best serve local cattle producers. During the meeting, board members identify current challenges facing the beef industry, discuss emerging topics producers would like to learn more about, and develop ideas for upcoming meetings and educational programs. The board also planned the next meeting season by selecting speakers, identifying timely production topics, and organizing events that provide valuable information and networking opportunities for members. These discussions help ensure the association continues to meet the needs of local cattle producers while promoting a strong and sustainable beef industry in Montgomery County.

Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP)

This summer has been especially challenging for pastureland and hay fields, as prolonged drought conditions have significantly reduced forage production across the area. To help offset some of the financial burden caused by these conditions, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency has opened enrollment for the Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP).
The Livestock Forage Disaster Program was established to provide financial assistance to livestock producers who experience grazing losses due to qualifying drought or wildfire conditions. As forage availability declines, many producers are forced to purchase additional feed or reduce herd numbers, creating significant financial hardship. LFP payments are intended to help eligible producers recover from these losses and keep their farming operations viable.
Producers who believe their grazing land has been impacted by qualifying drought conditions are encouraged to contact their local Farm Service Agency office to determine their eligibility and learn more about available assistance.

Get your local NC Peaches!

Montgomery County peach growers would love to have you come by to pick up a peck of fresh tree ripened peaches. They work hard year round to bring you these delicacies! To read more and learn how to find our local producers, check out our recent article: [*go.ncsu.edu/readext?1078453*](go.ncsu.edu/readext?1078453)



Extension Master Gardener Volunteers

The next EMGV business meeting will be August 3rd ,2026 from 5:30 pm - 6:30 pm. There was no July meeting. During the summer, volunteers are stationed at the Troy Farmers Market on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays of the month (weather permitting). Stop by with your horticultural questions! Upcoming programs include Initial Volunteer Training (July 31, Troy) and the Great SE Pollinator Census (Aug. 21-22, Star)





Junior Master Gardeners

4-H Jr Master Gardener Volunteer Day Camp, round 2 was July 20! Come by the Extension office and check out the new demonstration planting generously provided and planted by our various Extension community partners. The Jr Master Gardener youth ages 12-18 learned about:

- The ag value in monitoring wind, soil, water, and air temperatures
- The importance of testing soil nutrients
- Growing tomatoes and carrots
- Landscaping with ornamental plants

Montgomery County Beekeepers Association

The MCBA will meet at Montgomery Community College next on August 20. The Beekeepers did not meet in July. President Sherri notified the group of a member's recent passing; Fred Bailey. At the August meeting, David Bailey will speak on "The Cost of Beekeeping".



Family & Consumer Science

Rhonda Peters, FCS Agent

Mall Madness

In July, as part of our 4-H Summer Adventures series, we hosted "Mall Madness," an experiential financial literacy workshop that equipped 17 local 4-H youth (ages 12–18) with essential real-world money skills. The program combined interactive classroom instruction with hands-on practice, teaching teens how to budget, save, build credit, and navigate common sales traps. After exploring the mechanics of compound interest and calculating the true, long-term costs of minimum credit card payments, participants headed into the community to put their training to work. Youth put their new knowledge into action by calculating server tips at lunch, identifying retail marketing gimmicks during a mall scavenger hunt, and collaborating in teams to plan a complete date—including food, attire, and entertainment—on a strict $50 budget. The program delivered clear, measurable results that demonstrate the power of hands-on learning for young people. Following the workshop, participant test scores jumped by 45%, with teens showing a much deeper understanding of debt and smart consumer habits. More importantly, the program inspired lasting behavior changes: 100% of participants expressed intent to maintain or adopt regular bank savings habits, and over 80% committed to evaluating "wants" versus "needs" and comparison shopping before making future purchases. By building these critical habits early, Extension is helping ensure our youth grow into financially responsible, economically resilient adults who contribute positively to our local community.





Love Academy

The FCS Agent, 4-H Program Assistant and one of our summer interns partnered with the LOVE Academy in July to deliver an engaging wellness and food safety program focused on building lifelong healthy habits for 16 local youth. The initiative aimed to address youth health disparities by instilling four foundational behaviors for optimal wellness: increasing fruit and vegetable intake, staying physically active, choosing water over sugary drinks, and practicing frequent hand hygiene. Recognizing that access to healthy choices can often be a barrier, the workshop emphasized practical, accessible nutrition education. Through interactive learning games, participants personalized these health concepts and explored how small, daily choices directly impact their long-term well-being and energy levels. To translate knowledge into immediate action, the program featured a hands-on culinary skills component centered on safe food preparation. Youth learned essential food safety techniques before working in small groups to prepare a simple, no-cook recipe for honey-peanut butter protein balls. Designed without the need for electricity or specialized equipment, the activity empowered youth of all ages to safely replicate healthy snacking at home. The program delivered immediate positive outcomes, with 100% of participants successfully identifying the four core health behaviors and every youth and teacher expressing enthusiasm for making the recipe independently. By equipping young people with essential life skills, Extension continues to foster healthier, self-sufficient families across our county.









Roll, Bowl & Goal

This summer, Extension's Family and Consumer Sciences Agent, 4-H Program Assistant, and Administrative Assistant joined forces to launch "Roll, Bowl, and Goal," an energetic, hands-on wellness program tailored for our youngest 4-H members. The initiative was designed to make healthy living approachable and exciting by focusing on two core habits: incorporating a colorful variety of fruits and vegetables into daily meals and staying physically active. Through interactive games, youth explored the wide world of produce and learned how nutritious choices directly power their bodies to achieve personal health goals. Before stepping into the kitchen, participants covered essential food safety techniques, including a memorable handwashing demonstration that used Glo Germ lotion and black lights to visually show how germs spread and how thorough hand hygiene protects against foodborne illness. Following the hygiene lesson, youth rolled up their sleeves for a practical culinary activity, preparing a batch of no-cook, nutrient-dense peanut butter and oat protein balls while building foundational kitchen confidence. The afternoon put those health principles into full swing with a field trip to Asheboro for two hours of active bowling, turning physical fitness into a memorable, social experience. By connecting safe food preparation and wholesome eating directly with fun, high-energy movement, the program successfully demonstrated to young participants that wellness is both attainable and enjoyable. Youth returned home with practical food safety skills, a renewed enthusiasm for trying new produce, and a firsthand understanding of how active choices support a healthy lifestyle.









Cyclospora Update

In response to the recent uptick in *Cyclospora* infections across North Carolina, Extension has been actively sharing guidance from NC State Extension's Safe Plates program to help local residents safely navigate fresh produce handling. *Cyclospora* is a microscopic parasite commonly associated with fresh fruits, vegetables, and herbs contaminated during growing, harvesting, or processing, leading to intestinal illness. Because the exact source of the current outbreak remains unknown, public education focuses on practical risk-reduction strategies in the home to keep consumers safe while maintaining healthy eating habits.

Through official Safe Plates educational materials, Extension is advising consumers on critical produce safety protocols. While rinsing fresh produce under plain running water helps reduce parasites, it does not remove them entirely, making proper handling essential. Guidance includes gently rubbing produce under running water without soaps or produce washes, scrubbing firm produce like melons and cucumbers with a clean brush, cutting away damaged areas, and removing outer leaves from heads of lettuce or cabbage. To further minimize risk, consumers are encouraged to choose whole produce over pre-cut options, keep ready-to-eat foods separate from raw produce, and practice thorough handwashing and kitchen surface sanitation. Additionally, cooking produce to 158F effectively kills *Cyclospora*, offering an important safeguard for individuals with weakened immune systems.



Go, Glow, Grow Funding Secured

Extension is incredibly grateful to the Montgomery Foundation for awarding full grant funding to sustain the "Go, Glow, Grow" nutrition and wellness program for Pre-K students in Montgomery County Schools throughout the 2026–2027 school year. Extension has successfully delivered this vital early-childhood program locally for the past eight years, historically funded through federal SNAP-Ed grant dollars. When that federal funding stream was eliminated, local carryover funds allowed Extension to bridge the gap for one year, but the initiative faced complete elimination without new local support. Thanks to a successful grant application submitted by the Family and Consumer Sciences Agent, this essential partnership with Montgomery County Schools will continue without interruption.

The "Go, Glow, Grow" curriculum plays a crucial role in building early health literacy by teaching young children how different foods fuel their bodies—focusing on foods that give them energy to play ("Go"), foods that keep their skin, hair, and eyes healthy ("Glow"), and foods that help their muscles and bones grow strong ("Grow"). By engaging 4-year-olds through interactive lessons, sensory activities, and healthy food exposures, the program establishes foundational habits around nutrition and physical activity before children enter kindergarten. Preserving "Go, Glow, Grow" ensures that Montgomery County's youngest learners continue to develop the healthy behaviors that support lifelong growth, academic readiness, and overall well-being.

Opportunities Coming Up in Cooperative Extension

- Fridays July - Dec.: EMGV Initial Training Orientation, County Demo Kitchen
- August 3rd, 5:30pm: EMGV Monthly Business Meeting, County Demo Kitchen
- August 3rd - 7th : Millstone 4-H Day Camp Summer Program
- August 4th : Eggcellent Egg Virtual Training
- August 6th, 10:30am: Plant Propagation, Highland Comm Center
- August 15th & 17th, EMGV Workday, Location TBD
- August 17th : Montgomery County 4-H Livestock Club Meeting, Ag Center (6pm)
- August 19th, 12:30pm: Plant Propagation, Troy/Montgomery Senior Center
- August 18th : Eggcellent Egg in-depth Project Virtual Training
- August 20th, 6pm: Montgomery County Beekeepers, MCC Rm.200
- August 21st -22nd : Great Southeast Pollinator Census, Starworks Demo Garden
- August 25th : Montgomery County 4-H Reptile Club, Ag Center (6pm)
- August 31st, 5:30 pm: EMGV Monthly Business Meeting, County Demo Kitchen
- September 4th : Agricultural and Crafts Fair and Chicken Show, Ag Center
- September 8th : Montgomery County Cattlemen's Meeting
- September 16th : Eggcellent Egg Entry Day
- September 19th & 21st, EMGV Workday, Location TBD
- September 26th : Moore/Montgomery County Livestock Show
- September 29th : Eggcellent Egg Contest Virtual Ceremony

Please call our office at (910) 576-6011 for information on how to get involved with any of these opportunities.

Staff Directory



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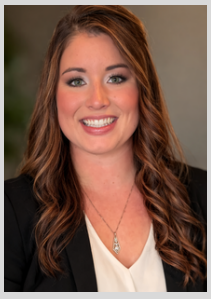
County Extension Director

Vacant
4-H Youth Development Agent



Elizabeth Callicutt
4-H Program Assistant



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